

# LifeNets Australia Incorporated

**LifeNets is now registered as an incorporated association in Australia!**

LIFENETS

Jim Bellamy's article (*next page*) tells of the interesting process followed to effect the registration and what that means as far as our status is concerned. *LifeNets* had operated since the early 2000s through a personal bank account but needed to change because of its growth, and particularly because of a government crackdown on so-called charities that existed for the benefit of the individuals involved, not people in need.

*LifeNets Australia Incorporated* (LAI) is now set up in a way that enhances its credibility and opens up opportunities for further growth.

The financial members of LAI thought you would like to know how we did in the 2015/2016 financial year, and how your very generous contributions were used.

People are able to contribute in a number of ways. A very easy way is through the Gold Coin Collections set up in eleven congregations. Most of us usually have something we can spare in our pocket, wallet or purse, and last year \$11,455 was donated in this way. The Gold Coin Collection is also set up at the four Australian Feast of Tabernacles sites as well as Penang in Malaysia. Donations at these sites in 2015 amounted to \$2,920.

We are all now very familiar with the greeting card program run by United's young people. Operating at our Australian feast for a few years now, the program has been extended to some festival sites in the United States and to New Zealand. All of the cards produced use creative art work and photographs submitted by young and older people throughout Australia. Having the cards available at each festival site means greetings to be sent to those unable to attend and, at the same time, provides money for *LifeNets* work around the world. Last year \$3,135 was raised.

Some people donate directly to *LifeNets* instead of using the Gold Coin program. This will be made easier now that *LifeNets* has been incorporated and has its own bank account. Individuals will be able to make regular donations through their own bank. \$2,399 was donated last year, including an amount of \$1,250 raised by Kim Mihalec of the Bacchus Marsh congregation. Kim sold calendars to raise funds to support some specific *LifeNets* activities in the Ukraine, a country where, because of political and armed conflicts, many are in real need. It should be mentioned that in the current year one individual donation of \$3,500 has been received. This is certainly one of the largest single donations ever made.

*"...helping people to help themselves..."*

For anyone wishing to make a donation direct to the LAI bank account, the BSB number is 033-135 and the account number 475653. Make sure the donor is identified so that an official receipt can be provided.

Overall, the income for the year was \$19,999. So how did we spend it?

By supporting the tertiary scholarship program for disadvantaged students in Latin America. This will equip the students to obtain employment and effectively serve their communities after graduation.

Drilling bore holes and installing pumps in Zambia and Cambodia (four in all) so that the communities can obtain regular supplies of clean, fresh water for themselves, their livestock and their fields.

Purchasing maize in the extremely poor country of Malawi for distribution to families. There have been years of



drought in Malawi and low yields have brought acute shortages and high prices. Distribution of the maize began in August this year.

The cost of these projects to *LifeNets* in Australia was \$18,500.

At the end of the financial year 2015/2016, \$15,072 was transferred from the old *LifeNets* to *LifeNets Australia Incorporated* to get it off to a good start.

There were some costs involved in setting up the new association, but already there is nearly \$20,000 available to support *LifeNets International* projects. The work involved in the incorporation took our attention away for a while, but we can start talking and thinking now about worthwhile projects to support in the time ahead. The new association has established a formal funding policy to ensure all our efforts and your contributions are efficiently and effectively focussed on ***to help people help themselves.***

We cannot thank you enough for your generous support of our various fund raising activities and look forward to it continuing so that many more projects can be undertaken to improve the lifestyles and well-being of many people in need. We are very fortunate to live in a country greatly blessed with the resources that are the foundation for our material needs. Many others are not so fortunate. ♦

Tom Burchard,  
President  
*LifeNets Australia  
Incorporated*



# How *LifeNets Australia* became Incorporated



As most who have followed *LifeNets* over the years know, *LifeNets Australia* began in the Box Hill congregation. Bill Eddington looked after it for a number of years before Trevor Huthnance took over. A few years later Bill resumed the responsibility. It was done on a fairly simple and uncomplicated basis, and was quite successful.

But the climate for small charities in Australia changed approximately 4 years ago, when the Australian Government became quite concerned about the rise of fake charities set up by people to benefit their own bank accounts. As a result, the *Australian Charities and Not for Profits Commission* (ACNC) was set up as a national watchdog in these areas.

Shortly before the establishment of ACNC, Trevor Huthnance asked me to look into having *LifeNets Australia* recognised as a Deductible Gift Recipient—that is, a Charity to which donations made can be Tax Deductions for the donors. After careful investigation it was decided that the strict requirements of attaining and keeping that status were too onerous for *LifeNets* and we do not usually receive donations of substantial amounts from members of the public. We did, however, agree that Incorporation of the Association under Australian law would be a good idea. At that time we were very busy and did not pursue that option.

Some time later we finally decided it was desirable that *LifeNets* should

incorporate. About the same time, at the Asia Pacific Regional Conference of *Universities of the Third Age* in Brisbane I had the privilege of speaking personally with a senior official of ACNC. He told me that in the 6 months of ACNC's existence it had successfully prosecuted over 50 individuals who had defrauded people through fake charities set up for their personal benefit. He also said the ACNC was not too concerned about charities attached to churches, since they seemed to be managed ethically. However, he told me that eventually all charities would have to be Incorporated, operate their own bank accounts, be registered with ACNC and supply annual statements to ACNC. Furthermore, if they operated in more than one state, they would also have to register with and report to Australian Securities and Investments Corporation (ASIC).

Armed with that information I consulted with a well-established legal firm which advised that unless *LifeNets* operated bank accounts, and actually worked and did things directly as an organisation in more than one state, it would not be considered to be *operating* in more than one state. He told me that the Church which he attended was associated with a similar charity to *LifeNets* and made contributions to various projects overseas and in Australia. He said they kept their office, including bank accounts in one state, but various church members and other volunteers made collections all around the

country, and their charity need not report to ASIC as well as ACNC. He could see no logical or legal reason why *LifeNets* should be any different.

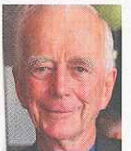
With these things in mind, Bill and I decided to proceed with incorporation of *LifeNets Australia*, and it all got underway with the telephone conference of *LifeNets* members which we now know as the *LifeNets Australia Incorporated* Inaugural Meeting on 26th June this year.

The process of applying for incorporation was complicated, nonetheless, we were able to have the Victorian Government's Consumer Affairs department grant *LifeNets Australia* incorporation on 28th June, 2016. Shortly after we obtained an Australian Business Number, and registered a business name.

ACNC were very helpful and patient with us, and we are very close to being fully accepted by them as a true Welfare Charity.

Already the status of *LifeNets Australia Incorporated* is greatly enhanced by incorporation, and donations are flowing in steadily. This newly re-invigorated body will now be able to help many more disadvantaged people to help themselves, and, in turn, learn to help others.

Jim Bellamy



☉ A borehole that was asked for and prayed for in Srok Village, Lpeak Commune in Cambodia was completed in January, largely funded by *LifeNets Australia*.

